

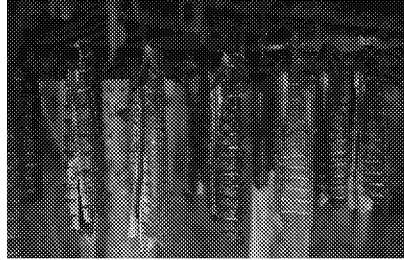
# Donlin Gold Mine

## Issue Brief

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### Summary

- Proposed Gold Mine in Southwest Alaska within a tributary watershed of the Kuskokwim.
- Would be the largest pure gold mine in the world
- Widespread local opposition
- Could open the region up to development of massive "Kuskokwim Mineral District" including adjacent BLM lands under consideration for opening to mineral entry.

### Local opposition:

## Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)



There is extensive opposition by the Alaska Native communities surrounding the proposed mine including:

- Alaska Village Council Presidents Resolution of Opposition representing 56 Federally Recognized Tribes
- Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation Resolution of Opposition
- 14 additional Tribal Resolutions of opposition
- National Congress of American Indians Resolution Opposing Donlin Gold

### • Impacts

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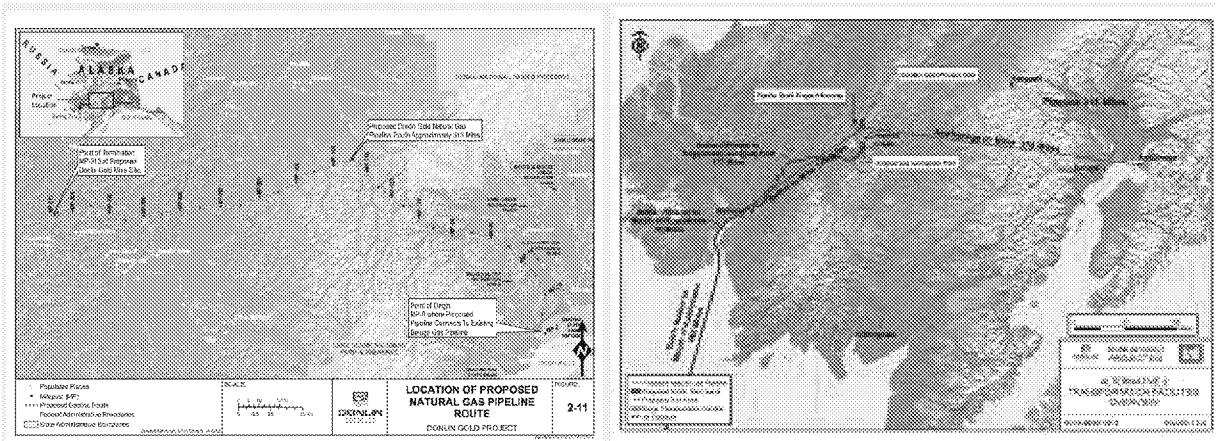
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- 2 square mile pit lake that will never meet water quality standards for arsenic and other metals and will require water treatment in perpetuity
- Destroy nearly 30 miles of salmon streams and effect thousands of acres of wetlands, essential to the livelihoods of indigenous people throughout the area
- 1.6 million tons of ore over 27 year mine life
- 315 mile gas pipeline from Cook Inlet, that will cut across wetlands and watersheds including hundreds of salmon streams.
- 2.5 billion tons of waste rock stored in an unlined pile that will perpetually leach arsenic and other metals into groundwater and the pit lake.
- 600 million tons of tailings stored behind a massive 471 foot dam. The dam would need to stand in perpetuity. Dam failure would release toxic materials downstream into the Kuskokwim River.

## Project Background

Located in Southwest Alaska, along Crooked Creek, a tributary of the Kuskokwim River. The Kuskokwim is the ninth largest river in the United States and the lifeblood of the region, supporting salmon and other fish that are vital to the ways of life of people in the region, including for subsistence practices.

The Donlin gold mine would be the largest pure gold mine in the world, with a total footprint spanning over 1400 miles from Cook Inlet the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. The project is a joint venture between the Canadian mining companies NovaGold and Barrick Gold, the latter of which is one of the largest gold mining companies in the world. The Final Environmental Impact Statement issued April 2018 and the Joint Record of Decision signed by Army Corps and BLM August 2018 were not based on science, and more importantly didn't listen to the voices of Alaska Natives that live nearby.



- Summary of administrative legal battles
  - **401 Certification**
    - Two successful rounds of informal review on behalf of tribes and tribal groups (certificate sent back to the agency staff for additional review because state does not have reasonable assurance the mine will comply with state water quality standards)
    - Adjudicated before an ALJ following agency's third attempt to issue the certificate. ALJ recommended the permit be rescinded in its entirety (use

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ALJ quote: “state water quality standards for mercury will undeniably be exceeded by the project in numerous locations, in many instances by a significant degree”.

- Commissioner Jason Brune rejected the recommendation & issued the certification anyway
- Currently under litigation by Orutsarmiut Native Council in Alaska state court
- **Pipeline Right-of-Way**
  - Four tribal governments and an Alaska-based conservation group filed litigation in state court
  - Agency capitulated and agreed to reconsider decision
  - Issued draft document with same issues, comments filed
  - Commissioner re-issued right-of-way in July 2021 and, on August 19, 2021, denied reconsideration.
- **Water Rights**
  - On July 22, 2021, six tribes filed an administrative appeal of the 12 water rights permits issued by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and are awaiting decision from the Commissioner
- Tribes’ repeated requests for government to government consultation with the State of Alaska and US ACOE have been ignored

### Inadequate Analysis

- Health Impact Assessment has not been made publicly available
- State upholding permits despite Judge’s and Tribes’ recommendations
- New/additional information since original EIS including local opposition, climate impacts, fisheries run failures

### Major Threats

- Violation of Water quality standards, particularly mercury
- Destruction of anadromous fish habitat, particularly salmon and smelt due to dewatering and barge traffic respectively
- Potential for a catastrophic tailings dam failure, which would contaminate downstream waters, a primary source of drinking water. - 2018 alone saw two major tailings dam failures, and 12 major failures between 2014 and 2018.